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Congress of the United States
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TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
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COAST GUARD AND MARITIME TRANSPORTATION
HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT
OVERSIGHT AND REFORM COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEES
ENVIRONMENT
NATIONAL SECURITY

October 14, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Secretary Pete Buttigieg
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20509

Dear Mr. President and Secretary Buttigieg,

As Ranking Member of the House Transportation Committee's Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, I write today to express my serious concerns about the workforce shortages and policies that have led to significant delays at our nation's ports, specifically the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.

The rest of the world has focused on modernizing their port operations, leaving our ports significantly less efficient. According to the World Bank, Asian container ports are the most efficient in the world¹. While American ports are making investments in their operations, federal funding for the Port Infrastructure Development Program is now being tied down with requirements on "improving racial equity²." It is difficult to discern the connection between critical race theory and improving infrastructure.

Workforce issues caused by COVID-19 were legitimate, but the policies that followed encouraged the labor force to stay home rather than get back to work. The combination of COVID-19 lockdowns, extended unemployment benefits, truck driver and labor shortages, and California state laws³ that place limits on truck age and discourage owner-operated drivers have crippled our nation's ability to bounce back from the waning pandemic.

The U.S. economy suffered during the COVID-19 outbreak, and should be roaring back due to safe and effective vaccines created by Operation Warp Speed. Instead, the American people are facing self-inflicted pain in all areas of the economy. Inflation is real. The Department of Labor reported the Consumer Price Index (CPI) has risen 5.4% since September of 2020⁴. The energy crisis is real. The U.S. Energy Information Administration reported the average price for a gallon of gas is \$3.26⁵. This crisis at our nation's ports only increases the cost of consumer goods and leads to higher inflation, putting even more pressure on our economy.

Furthermore, your Administration's decision to impose vaccine mandates on private businesses will only exacerbate the workforce issues.

¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/05/05/asian-ports-dominate-global-container-port-performance-index>

² [Frequently Asked Questions - Port Infrastructure Development Grants | MARAD \(dot.gov\)](#)

³ <https://ww3.arb.ca.gov/msprog/onrdiesel/documents/fsregsum.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/cpi.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.eia.gov/petroleum/gasdiesel/>

I encourage you to put a stop to unconstitutional vaccine mandates, abandon your efforts to align infrastructure enhancement programs with non-germane goals of "social equity", and engage with the private sector to determine solutions for the serious workforce issues facing our country.

The United States needs to enact policies that will incentivize individuals to re-enter the labor market, fill truck driver shortages, and ensure our warehouses are fully staffed and operating at maximum levels.

We need to move forward and get all segments of our intermodal supply chain working again.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Gibbs". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bob" and last name "Gibbs" clearly distinguishable.

Bob Gibbs
Member of Congress